



CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C., 20515

September 14, 2018

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary of Agriculture
1400 Jefferson Drive SW
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Secretary Perdue:

I am writing with concern regarding the decision by the USDA to lift the stay on mineral exploration in the Rainy River Watershed.

Minnesota has a rich history of taconite mining that dates back generations. However, the copper-nickel mining proposed today has never been done before in Minnesota. It will take place on the border of the Boundary Waters and along the water that flows directly into this pristine wilderness area.

The Boundary Waters is America's most visited wilderness. Many experts have raised concerns about mining in its vicinity because the area lacks the geology to buffer acid drainage. The lakes and rivers of the Boundary Waters connect the whole region, and pollution that begins in one part of the watershed will inevitably spread to other areas.

The Boundary Waters attracts over 150,000 visitors to the region every year. These visitors bolster the economy of the region. They buy camping and fishing gear from local outfitters, stay in the region's hotels, eat at their restaurants, and buy camping and fishing permits; spending nearly \$57 million at businesses in the region every year. The economic impact of the Boundary Waters is undeniable, as is the economic threat to the area if nickel-copper mining pollution were to occur.

With that in mind, I urge you to reconsider lifting the stay on mineral exploration and allow the environmental study that was scheduled to conclude in January to continue. I look forward to discussion this with you further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Erik Paulsen".

Erik Paulsen
Member of Congress